The Bill of Rights

These were adopted because states such as New York, Virginia, and Massachusetts would not have ratified the Constitution without them. They provided protection for the people against the power of the National Government. The First Ten Amendments to the Constitution are meant to limit the power of the National Government.

**The First Amendment** – Congress Shall make no law establishing a national religion, or prohibiting the free exercise of speech and the press, or the right of the people to peacefully assemble, or to petition the government.

**The Second Amendment** – Because a well-regulated militia is necessary for the security of the nation, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed.

**The third Amendment** – Soldiers shall not be quartered (housed) in any house without the consent of the owner, unless congress passes a law allowing it. (this is in direct response to the quartering act, one of the laws passed by parliament in the days before the revolution.

**The Fourth Amendment** – Protects you, your home, and your possessions from being unreasonably searched by the government or the officials without a search warrant issued by a judge.

**The Fifth Amendment** – Guarantees that people cannot be tried twice for the same crime if a verdict has been decided by a jury (this is frequently called “double jeopardy”). Also protects people from self-incrimination, which mean that they cannot be forced to testify against themselves (“I plead the fifth”). People cannot be deprived of “life, liberty, or property” without due process of law.

**The Sixth Amendment** – People accused of committing a crime have the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury and in the district where the crime was committed. The accused must be informed as to why they are being put on trial, know who the witnesses are against him/her, have the opportunity to put on witnesses who support him/her, and the assistance of a lawyer.

**The Seventh Amendment** – Law suits involving more than twenty dollars will be decided by a jury.

**The Eighth Amendment** – Excessive Bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, or cruel and unusual punishment inflicted.

**The Ninth Amendment** – The rights guaranteed in the Constitution will not take away any other rights from the people.

**The Tenth Amendment** – those powers not given directly to the national government are reserved for the several states.